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SUBJECT: DESERTERS REVEAL DETAILS OF THE FARC'S BLOOD
PURGE OF SUSPECTED INFILTRATORS

11. (C) SUMMARY: SIX GUERRILLA DESERTERS UNFOLDED TO JOURNALISTS AN EYE-OPENING ACCOUNT OF ATROCITIES COMMITTED BY THE FARC LEADERSHIP AGAINST ITS TROOPS IN THE MIDDLE MAGDALENA RIVER VALLEY. CARLOS ENRIQUE CARDONA (AKA BRAULIO HERRERA), A FARC LEADER IN THE MAGDALENA, STAGED A SERIES OF MASSACRES OF MANY OF HIS OWN MEN WHOM HE SUSPECTED OF BEING GOVERNMENT INFILTRATORS. THE REAL MOTIVATION, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE CHAGRIN EXPERIENCED BY CARDONA AND OTHER REGIONAL FARC LEADERS AT INCREASING DISAFFECTION AND DESERTION WITHIN GUERRILLA RANKS. THE INCIDENT UNDERSCORES THE FARC'S READINESS TO COMMIT ATROCITIES. IT ALSO SHOWS UP AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AS ONE-SIDEDLY EMPHASIZING THE GOC'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD, WHILE DOWNPLAYING GUERRILLA ATROCITIES. END SUMMARY

UP FOUNDER ORDERS PUNITIVE KILLINGS OF FARC TROOPS

12. (U) THE SIX DESERTERS SPOKE TO JOURNALISTS FROM THEIR RURAL HIDING PLACE IN NORTHERN COLOMBIA IN EARLY NOVEMBER. THE BLOOD PURGE REPORTEDLY DECIMATED SEVERAL FARC FRONTS IN THE MIDDLE MAGDALENA RIVER VALLEY REGION: AT LEAST 200 AND AS MANY AS 500 FARC GUERRILLAS MAY HAVE BEEN EXECUTED IN LATE 1988 AND EARLY 1989, ACCORDING TO THE SIX DESERTERS. CARLOS ENRIQUE CARDONA (AKA BRAULIO HERRERA), THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST OF THE KILLINGS, IS A PROMINENT FARC LEADER AND A FOUNDER OF THE PATRIOTIC UNION (UP) PARTY (IN 1985). HE ORDERED THE PUNITIVE KILLINGS AFTER HE FAILED IN LATE 1988 TO RECOVER THE MIDDLE MAGDALENA RIVER VALLEY, A FARC STRONGHOLD UNTIL THE LOCAL "SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS" DROVE THE GUERRILLAS OUT IN 1981-82. THE EXECUTIONS WERE PRECEDED BY MOCK COURT MARTIALS TO GIVE A FORMAL APPEARANCE THAT JUSTICE HAD BEEN SERVED.

FARC SENTENCES PURGER TO DEATH, BUT THE PC SAVES HIM

13. (U) THE DESERTERS SAID THAT IN MARCH 1989 THE FARC HIGH COMMAND SENT AN INVESTIGATOR ("AYUDANTIA") TO THE CARDONA'S ELEVENTH FRONT IN THE MAGDALENA. THE ENVOY FROM THE HIGH COMMAND ENDED THE INDISCRIMINATE EXECUTIONS. HE THEN ORDERED CARDONA TO RELINQUISH HIS COMMAND AND APPEAR BEFORE THE FARC'S TOP LEADERSHIP IN THE HILLS OF META DEPARTMENT. IN APRIL, THE FARC'S SECRETARIAT TRIED AND SENTENCED CARDONA/HERRERA TO DEATH (IN ABSENTIA) FOR HAVING FAILED TO RETAKE THE MAGDALENA REGION. ONE OF THE SIX DESERTERS, A FORMER ASSISTANT TO FARC LEADERS MANUEL MARULANDA AND JACOBO ARENAS, ACCUSED THE FARC'S LEADERSHIP OF TRYING TO HUSH UP CARDONA'S ATROCITIES TO PREVENT FURTHER DEMORALIZATION AMONG FARC TROOPS. THE DESERTERS RELATED THAT THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COLOMBIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCC) WAS ABLE TO INTERCEDE IN CARDONA'S BEHALF AND MITIGATE HIS SENTENCE TO ONE OF EXPULSION FROM THE FARC. LATER THIS YEAR, THE PCC SENT CARDONA TO MOSCOW, WHERE HE NOW RESIDES ON A "STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP."

COMMENT:

14. (C) THE REVELATIONS BY THE FARC DESERTERS ARE YET ANOTHER INDICATION OF THE READINESS OF THE GUERRILLAS TO COMMIT ATROCITIES. THEY ALSO SUGGEST THAT SOME FARC LEADERS ARE INSECURE AND WILLING TO RESORT TO DESPERATE MEASURES TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF THEIR TROOPS. IRONICALLY, THE INDIVIDUAL ACCUSED OF COMMITTING THIS ATROCITY WAS A LEADING FOUNDER OF THE UP, ONE OF THE MORE VOCAL CRITICS OF THE GOC HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD. EVEN MORE IRONICALLY IT WAS THE PCC, THE MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE UP, WHICH INTERCEDED ON CARDONA'S BEHALF AND ASSISTED HIM TO OBTAIN SHELTER IN THE SOVIET UNION. THIS INCIDENT ALSO UNDERSCORES THE WRONGHEADEDNESS OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, WHOSE ONE-SIDED REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN COLOMBIA EMPHASIZES THE GOVERNMENT'S RECORD AND DOWNPLAYS GUERRILLA ATROCITIES SUCH AS THIS ONE.

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